



City of Westminster

NEWS AND NOTES

Volume One, Issue 6a



LETTER FROM THE MAYOR



Dear Residents:

As 2009 comes to a close, we need to reflect on the events and activities of the past year. While events have recently been overshadowed with the “gloom and doom” of budget cuts and reductions, we have to recognize that this has been a year of substantial progress for our city.

Our continuing struggle with water issues have been alleviated by the opening of our new **Cranberry Water Treatment Plant**, one of the most technologically-advanced plants in the country, and the completion of the **Medford Quarry Pipeline** to provide substantial relief during the time of drought.

Fortunately, this year also produced such an adequate rainfall that **Code Yellow** status was not declared. The **Roops Mill well** came on line and the application for the **Gesell well** was completed. The City completed the new **Water Resources Element** in the Comprehensive Plan, and also a joint County/Municipal Water Resources Element, providing a plan for water and sewer capacity over the next decade. The City was also awarded \$800,000 in **Economic Stimulus funding** to replace all water meters in our system with computerized read capability. The City filed a joint application with Carroll County for \$5M for a pipeline to **Union Mills** which has not yet been funded.

To help celebrate the dedication of these new capital improvements to our water system, Governor Martin O'Malley proclaimed **Westminster Capital for a Day** and brought the entire executive cabinet to spend the day in Westminster. The Deputy Secretary of the Maryland Department of the Environment dedicated the new water treatment plant; the Secretary of the Department of the Housing and Community Development toured the Union Street/Pennsylvania Avenue neighborhood, and the Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources dedicated King Park. The Governor toured Main Street, stopping to visit with business owners and lunching at Guillinova. The afternoon concluded with a Cabinet Meeting at McDaniel College. This was a great opportunity to showcase the good things we are accomplishing in Westminster.

The **King Park** project was completed this year—the City's first entirely handicap-accessible playground. This Park was a joint project with Project Open Space funding of \$48,215 and contributions from Robin Ford, developer, totaling \$115,000. Construction of the new **Community Building** in City Park began this year, and a **Community Parks and Playground grant** for \$50,000 was received to provide ADA compliant improvements to all of our City Parks.

And for parents and youngsters, the new **Skateboard Park** was constructed and opened. This joint project with the Carroll County Career and Technology Center received the **Award of Excellence** from the Maryland Municipal League at the June Conference. This park is in use during daylight hours every day of the week.

The Tri-Street Neighborhood Task Force reconvened and reviewed progress in that neighborhood: Sale of a renovated property at **18A Union Street**, completion of the **Maple Street** residential façade improvement program, and construction of the Union Street/Pennsylvania Avenue **Community Legacy Streetscape** project. The capstone of the revitalization of this neighborhood will be the building of nine new, affordable townhomes by **Episcopal Housing Corporation**, using a major Community Development Block Grant and HOME funds from the Department of Housing and Community Development.

In other areas, we received a \$25,000 **recycling grant** which was used to recycle electronic waste, and **energy conservation funding** to equip our buildings with energy-saving lights, etc. The first **red light cameras** were installed on Route 140 and Nursery Road, and new signs directing tourists to sites of interest in Westminster were approved.

The holiday season is approaching and I hope that each of you will take time to celebrate with family and friends. Please spend a moment of reflection for all that we have to be thankful for during these difficult times.

The President and members of the Common Council join me and City staff in wishing you and yours a joyous Holiday Season.

Kevin Utz
Mayor

Water Conservation Tips

Everyone should be aware by now that water is a precious and limited resource in Maryland. But, not everyone is aware of what they can do to conserve and help ensure the availability of this resource. Below are some simple actions you can take to do your part (and save a little \$\$ on your water bill).

| Conservation Measure | Approx cost | Water saved gpd/household | Annual Savings | |
|---|-------------|------------------------------|----------------|--------|
| | | | City | County |
| Replace old(>3gpf) toilet with a HE model (1.3 gpf) | \$200 | 30 | \$42 | \$55 |
| Fix leaky toilet | \$20 | 200 | \$275 | \$365 |
| Install low-flow showerhead (1.5gpm) | \$10 | 13 | \$18 | \$24 |
| Install faucet aerators | \$10 | 12 | \$17 | \$22 |
| Install Energy Star clothes washer | \$400 | 100/week | \$22 | \$26 |
| Conservation Landscaping | \$25 | 25 | \$35 | \$45 |

The annual savings estimates are based on water usage charges for the City's water system customers as of July 1, 2009, and represent consumption similar to the national average for each measure.

**To learn more about conserving water inside the home, visit
www.epa.gov/watersense and www.energystar.gov**

Since approximately 30% of potable water is used outside the home for irrigation, cleaning, and pool filling; here are some tips to conserve when you're outside:

Plan your landscape- assess light, water, and drainage conditions for all planting areas on your property. Draw a diagram so you always know what plant characteristics are required.

Select and Group Plants Appropriately- Choose plants best suited for the conditions where they are to be planted. Choose drought tolerant and native plants when possible.

Limit turf areas- turf is the most inefficient type of landscape treatment available. It requires watering, mowing, weeding, and fertilizing that other treatments do not. Consider planting beds with paths, pervious hardscapes, or vegetable gardens; only using turf where necessary.

Improve the soil- soils having proper nutrient and organic matter levels will grow healthier plants with less watering and work.

Mulch- for most planting beds, adding 2" of organic mulch in the spring will lower the soil temperature, slow evaporation, and add organic material to the soil.

Irrigate Efficiently- don't water between 9am and 7pm, deliver water to the soil around the plant, and water thoroughly to develop deep root systems. Also, don't waste water on sidewalks and driveways-they don't need it.

Maintain the landscape- ongoing maintenance will keep plants healthy and reduce their needs.

**To learn more about conserving water in the landscape, visit
www.wateruseitwisely.com
www.denverwater.org/Conservation
www.hgic.umd.edu**



News for TreeHuggers

In the last edition of the city newsletter you read about the City's commitment to urban trees through participation in the Tree City program.



In this edition, the City of Westminster would like to further emphasize these values in terms that are easy to understand.

The benefits of a tree are normally calculated in five areas:

Stormwater: A mature tree holds about 30% of the rain that falls on its canopy, and stores another 30% in its root system. This is water that doesn't make it to paved surfaces where it carries pollutants into streams. This also helps avoid soil erosion in less developed areas.

Property Value: Studies are showing that properties with ample mature trees are valued 10-15% higher than those without trees in comparable settings. In residential settings, additional value is added by the traffic calming effect of street trees and increased walkability.

Energy: Using deciduous trees to shade the south and east sides, and evergreens to block winter winds on the north side of your home can reduce energy consumption by 15-30%. Trees that shade paved surfaces can lower city temperatures by 3-5 degrees, resulting in lower cooling costs and longer lifespan for asphalt surfaces.

Air Quality: Trees absorb gases like CO₂, NO₂, SO₂, and VOCs. These gases have shown to be harmful to people and the environment in large quantities. Trees also intercept particulates in the air, and lower air temperature reducing ground-level ozone.

CO₂: Trees sequester CO₂ from the air and contribute to reduced CO₂ release from energy production. It takes 20 mature, average-sized trees to offset the CO₂ produced by one car driving 12,000 miles per year. Trees next to streets absorb up to 9 times more CO₂ than trees over 50ft from the roadway.

Westminster has nearly 1,100 trees lining city streets and in other public areas. That's enough to intercept 1.8 million gallons of rainwater, avoid 85,000 KWh of electricity generation, and sequester 175 tons of carbon. These trees also have the potential to add \$86,200 worth of value to adjacent properties.

So, as the old saying goes... *"the best time to plant a tree is twenty years ago, the second best time is today."*

Need Space for Your Next Party?

Consider having your next scrapbooking party, business meeting, baby shower, or birthday party at the Community Building located at 325 Royer Road. This facility is equipped with a kitchenette that includes a refrigerator, microwave oven, stovetop, sink, plenty of cabinet space, and a spacious, heated bathroom. The foyer contains a large coat rack along with shelving for storage. This area accommodates 50 people comfortably with tables and chairs provided. Please contact the Recreation and Parks Office at 410-848-9161 to check availability. *Booking now for January 2010!*



Street Tree FAQs

Below are some of the most frequently asked questions about the rules and regulations for street trees in Westminster. Hopefully, this will clear up some of your questions:

Who do the street trees belong to? The best way to think of it is that they belong to the residents of the City. They are in a public right-of-way, so technically “the public” has access to them. In many cases the City actually owns the right-of way, so that makes the road and sidewalk public property.

Who takes care of them? The adjacent property owner is responsible for trimming the trees between their property and the road (section 139-7 of the City code). On some main roads, City crews or the City’s tree care contractor will periodically assess and perform work of the trees. This does not relieve the responsibility of the adjacent property owner, it just provides additional oversight on some key streets.

Can I cut down a street tree? You can contract a licensed Roadside Tree Expert to remove a street tree in front of your property if: (1) The tree poses a hazard to property, public safety or health; (2) the tree is deteriorated or substantially damaged; (3) removal will improve the aesthetic appearance of the right-of-way. These are the only reasons for which Maryland Department of Natural Resources will approve a permit for street tree removal.

Permit? When is one required, and how do I get it? You need a permit from Maryland Department of Natural Resources to plant, prune, remove, root prune, or treat any street tree. This is to help ensure that tree work is done by those with proper training, and that the work will not create circumstances that are detrimental to other people, property, or other trees. A permit application can be obtained at www.dnr.maryland.gov/forests/programapps/newrtlaw.asp, by contacting our local DNR office at (410)848-9290, or the City Department of Planning at 410-848-9000.

The tree roots are ruining my sidewalk! What should I do? Tree roots can make some sidewalks look more like skateboard parks. Ideally, sidewalks are planned and installed to minimize the risk of tree root damage, but in many older neighborhoods, the problem is already there, and now the property owner has a problem to fix. City code requires that the sidewalk remain clear, passable, and maintained to City specs. When it comes time to fix the sidewalk, be sure to consult an Arborist to discuss ways to fix your sidewalk without damaging the trees, while taking precautions to avoid reoccurrence.

Branches from my street tree are hitting my house- what should I do? Contact a licensed tree expert to prune the offending branches. A list of licensed experts can be found at: www.dnr.state.md.us/forests/programapps/newtreeexpert.asp

I want to get more trees in my neighborhood- where do I start? Connect with the City Tree Commission through the City Arborist or Planning Department. The Commission can recommend programs and resources, or may be interested in adding your neighborhood as a project in the near future. I would like to learn more about trees and urban forestry-where should I look? Check out the sites listed below, or the Tree Commission’s page: http://www.westminstermd.gov/citygov/citygov_tree.html.

If you still have a question, feel free to contact the Department of Planning at 410-848-9000, or the City Arborist’s office at 410-848-9077.

Carroll Arts Center Events: December 2009 and January 2010

December 2 through 6: 12th Annual Festival of Wreaths. The Festival, which has become one of Carroll County's most well attended holiday events, will feature more than 230 uniquely decorated theme wreaths on display for the public through a five-day silent auction. Proceeds benefit the Carroll County Arts Council. Festival Hours are 10 am to 8 pm Wednesday through Saturday and 1 pm to 4 pm on Sunday. Bidding ends promptly at 4 pm on Sunday, December 6. High Bidders need not be present at auction close. Admission is free. The Festival is sponsored by PNC Bank and The Carroll County Times.

December 2 through 6: Free Holiday Movies!

On Wednesday, Dec 2: "Holiday Inn" 1pm, 101min; "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" 5pm, 65min; "Frosty the Snowman" 7pm, 25min. On Thursday, Dec 3: "George Balanchines' The Nutcracker" 1pm, 93min; "William Wegman's 12 Dogs of Christmas" 4:30pm, 30min. On Friday, Dec 4: "It's A Wonderful Life" 1pm, 132min; "National Geographic Animal Holiday" 4:30pm, 30min. On Saturday, Dec 5: "William Wegman's 12 Dogs of Christmas" 4:30pm, 30min; "Joyeux Noel" see additional information below. On Sunday, Dec 6: "Emmett Otter's Jug Band Christmas" 1:30pm, 100min; "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" 3:30pm, 52min. The movies will be shown at the Carroll Arts Center located at 91 W Main Street in downtown Westminster.



Thursday, December 3 and Friday, December 4 at 7:30pm, and Saturday, December 5 and 11am and 2pm: A "Charlie Brown Christmas" with live jazz! Back by popular demand will be the unique pairing of the beloved animated film "Charlie Brown's Christmas" with the infectious Vince Guaraldi jazz score performed live by the Eric Byrd Trio. Sponsored by Woodhaven Development Corporation. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$8 for CCAC members, seniors 60+ and students 18 and under.

Saturday, December 5 at 7pm: FLICC Presents "Joyeux Noel" 2005, PG-13, 116min, French and German with English subtitles. This heartwarming movie chronicles the true-life war-time event that would offer hope for peace in mankind's darkest hour. Set in war-torn Europe on Christmas Eve in 1914, the lonely souls of the front lines abandoned their arms to reach out to their enemies on the battlefield and wish them a Merry Christmas. The screening is free, seating is on a first come, first served basis. Concession sales will benefit the Arts Council's Tevis College Arts Scholarship Fund. Before the film, the audience will be able to visit the 12th Annual Festival of Wreaths, which will also take place in the Arts Center.



December 10-13: The "Gallery of Gifts" will be presented at the Carroll Arts Center in hopes of beginning a new annual tradition by transforming their Tevis Gallery during the holiday shopping season. This special cash-and-carry exhibit will resemble an outdoor craft market rather than a traditional gallery exhibit, as 16 artists will display their festive wares in a booth-style setting. There will be a wide variety of hand-crafted creations, from inexpensive stocking stuffers to truly elegant special gifts.

The exhibit will be open from 10am to 4pm Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, and 10am to 8pm on Thursday. An artist's reception will be on Thursday, Dec 10 from 5 to 7pm, with complimentary wine, cheese, hot chocolate, and holiday confections. Admission is free.



Friday, December 11, 8pm and Saturday, December 12, 3pm & 8pm: A live production of "A Christmas Carol" will be presented by the acclaimed Maryland Ensemble Theatre. Beautiful staging, breathtaking special effects, and stellar performances combine for a magical theatrical experience. Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$12 for CCAC members, students 18 and under, and seniors 60+.

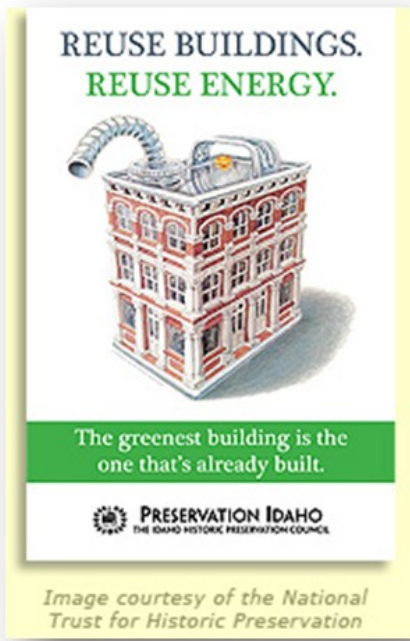
Friday, January 15, 8pm: FLICC Presents "Satin Rouge" 2002, not rated, 100min. The mysterious, yet traditional art of belly dancing takes center stage in this uplifting film. After the death of her husband, Lilia's life revolves around her teenage daughter, Salma. After initial hesitation, Lilia learns the art of belly dancing. French and Arabic with English subtitles. Tickets are \$6 for adults and \$5 for CCAC Members, students 18 and under, and seniors 60+.

Saturday, January 23, 7pm: Iron Ridge Bluegrass returns to the Carroll Arts Center! Due to popular demand, the high-energy, traditional bluegrass band, Iron Ridge, will perform a live concert at the Carroll Arts Center. Their toe-tapping, hand-clapping music has infectious rhythms and natural harmonies. They play a variety of traditional country and gospel favorites, and have won numerous awards, including the coveted top award at the Fiddler's Convention. Tickets for the concert are \$14 for adults and \$12 for Arts Council Members, seniors 60+ and students 18 and under. Snow date for the concert is Sunday, January 24 at 7pm.



For more information on any of these events, contact the Carroll Arts Center at 410-848-7272 or visit www.CarrollArtsCouncil.org

Save Energy During the Winter Months



As winter sets in and cold winds howl around our historic streets and neighborhoods, thoughts turn to the upcoming holidays, anticipation of our first snowstorm, and the dreaded winter heating bills. If you live or work in one of the more than 1400 Historic buildings in our town, you may be reading this article next to an old wooden window, or a cast-iron radiator, sitting between un-insulated plaster walls, or behind an old, paneled hardwood front door. You're probably thinking about all the warm air escaping through all the cracks and crannies in those old features, and how you'll need to replace them to keep your house warm this winter.

If you're in this situation, the Westminster Historic District Commission urges you to peruse the National Trust for Historic Preservation's (NTHP) new web resource for winterizing historic structures:

<http://www.preservationnation.org/issues/weatherization/>.

The agency's goal is to promote the preservation of historic buildings and their key features by presenting research and best practices related to renovating old buildings to handle the extreme of winter weather. You may be surprised to find that your old home or office building has built-in features that were intended to increase its performance. Many of the recommended upgrades found on this site are eligible for rebates from your energy supplier, and tax credits from the federal government.

So preserve your old home, reduce your heating and cooling costs, and reduce your carbon footprint by learning how to work with your old building to increase its performance.

Remember to Clear Snow and Ice from Sidewalks

From the Code Enforcement Office

As a Reminder to Westminster Citizens:

Please remember to have your sidewalks cleared within 24 hrs of a snow or ice event. Failure to do so, not only could result in liability on the property owner's behalf, but also a \$200 fine issued by Code Inspector and a possible District Court appearance as well.



Stay safe during this winter season!